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ABSTRACT

This paper presents an analysis of adolescent violent behavior in schools. The paper offers an overview that includes student violence and discipline issues, school law, special services for at-risk students, and programs to enhance the opportunities for successful interventions. The paper is also a vehicle for a new discipline-management guideline system to be implemented at one middle school's alternative education program. The paper focuses on: (1) student violence from the street to the classroom; (2) related discipline concerns in schools and communities; (3) special-education laws and special services; (4) the impact of suspensions, expulsions, and dropouts; (5) student groups that cause major discipline problems; (6) suggested solutions to student discipline problems; and (7) procedures for developing programs that address student violence. It is suggested that alternative discipline programs are vital to every community that has public education. A well-organized alternative program can serve as a public-relations tool for a district interested in attracting those families that will become active in the schools and the community. Guidelines for the Phoenix Program are offered in an appendix. (RJM)

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ANALYSIS OF STUDENT MISBEHAVIOR PATTERNS: CORRECTIVE GUIDELINES FOR ADMINISTRATORS AND TEACHERS IN ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

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INTRODUCTION

Violence to and by students has always been a part of education in many Western democracies (Finkelstein, 1990; Hyman & Wise, 1979; Moles, 1990). Hyman (1994) presented evidence that as far back as the late 1800s, ethnic gangs and their conflicts infiltrated the schools. These gangs, committing acts of violence, were allowed to grow in numbers because people did not want to get involved or believed these problems to be other people's responsibility.

Youth violence still touches the lives of every child in this country. Children are either witnesses, victims, or perpetrators in rural towns, suburban communities, and inner cities. "Violence invades homes, classrooms, city streets, and community institutions" (McCart, 1994, p. 5). It might appear that to address the issue of school violence, would mean to devise or develop creative and imaginative guidelines to solve the problems; however, school administrators must realize that they will be dealing with student and family problems that are beyond their ability to control or manage. School personnel should not pursue total elimination of all acts of school violence, but rather develop strategies and provide resources that will

reduce acts of student violence in both number and intensity (Heller, 1996).

A report of the National Association of State Boards of Education entitled "Schools Without Fear," states that schools should be "advocates for all children." Yet the report focuses almost exclusively on the needs and "rights" of disruptive students. The kids who are forgotten are the vast majority of students who do not make any trouble. According to Shanker (1995), the well-meaning people who believe that schools should put violent kids first must realize that they are helping to destroy public education.

In order to realize any measure of success in dealing with discipline and this kind of school violence, it becomes essential to consider such factors as special education versus regular education, inclusion, Section 504, suspensions and expulsions, students on medication, and students with disabilities before implementing guidelines that will effect a student for years.

Many programs have been developed to help keep more students at their home school and ease these types of burdens on school districts to look for funds to maintain a successful, alternative discipline program. However, it becomes increasingly difficult because of many differences of opinion. Researchers with the North Carolina Education and Law Project (1996) presented a paper in which a belief was expressed that alternative schools became a dumping ground for unwanted students.

Cortez (1997) stated the rationale for alternative settings suggests that teachers are expected to improve instructional opportunities for students who are not referred. Thus, it is fair to ask whether or not instruction has indeed improved in settings, where some students were sent to alternative educational programs.

Laws affecting special education students, for example, require an alternative school to handle an incident involving special education differently from regular education. Yell and Peterson (1996) contend that the use of disciplinary procedures with students with disabilities in school, however, has proven to be a controversial issue. Although the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and regulations implementing these laws are quite detailed, there are no specific guidelines for the use of disciplinary procedures (Hartwig & Reusch, 1994).

Correct interpretation of special education laws is time-consuming, expensive, and frustrating (Walsh, 1998). For example, when explaining IDEA Law 20 USC 1415(k)(1), there are three different interpretations of this law pertaining to suspensions. For school personnel, it becomes an important matter of choosing the correct interpretation.

The purpose of this paper was to offer a literary overview which was inclusive of student violence and discipline issues, school law and special services for at-risk students, and programs to enhance the opportunities for successful interventions. Another purpose of this paper was to write a new discipline management guideline system to be implemented at The Phoenix Program, the alternative education program for the Azle Independent School District.

This system was designed so that any new personnel in an alternative discipline program could easily learn the system. For administrators, the guidelines and system can provide for a more efficient program that will be of great benefit to the students, with increased motivation to return and remain at the home campus. For teachers, the development of these guidelines will

ensure appropriate training that will permit successful implementation that will reap benefits for the students.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The culturally diverse people who make up our great society are expected to meet and successfully function with ideas, hopes, aspirations, and creativity within our public schools (Heller, 1996). Within these walls, however, are individuals who may make socially inappropriate and unacceptable decisions regarding the resolution of their personal conflicts (Heller, 1996). Thus, providing a safe school environment is imperative.

For many children, schools are the safest place in their lives. For teachers to teach and children to learn, there must be a safe and inviting educational environment (Curico & First, 1993). Grady (1996) believes, as a society, we appear to have adopted a course of aiding and abetting troublemakers at school. In the literature concerning schools and violence as well as in discussions with school administrators, it is apparent that a minority of students may be causing excessive strain on the positive advances of schools (Grady, 1996).

Knox (1996) agreed with Grady and maintained that most students came to school each day to be successfully engaged in the excellent instructional programs and services that were available to them. Yet, the inappropriate actions of a few individuals cast aspersions on the same successful programs and services. Learning can not take place in an

atmosphere of fear or intimidation, be it real or imaginary (Knox, 1996). The misdeeds of one can hamper the overall learning environment.

It is the responsibility of the principal to confront the issue of behavior management at the building level (Hartzell & Petrie, 1992). It is their contention that successful school-level discipline can be realized when administrative skills are applied in three dimensions of school life such as: (1) the organizational structure of the school, (2) the behavior of the teachers, and (3) the behavior of the students. Through strong leadership and careful attention to the network of relationships that exist in the school, the principal can nourish a school atmosphere of civility rather than hostility (Walker, 1995).

Student Violence From the Streets to Classrooms

Violence to and by students has always been a part of education in many Western democracies. Hyman (1994) presented evidence that as far back as the late 1800s, ethnic gangs and their conflicts spilled over into the schools. These gangs committing acts of violence were allowed to grow in numbers because people either did not want to get involved or believed these problems should be dealt with by others.

The alarming rate of school violence, vandalism, and classroom disruption have stimulated many questions concerning policies and practices in American schools (Bybee & Gee, 1982). Questions and recommendations usually represent an array of differing views from liberal to conservative. (Bybee & Gee, 1982) maintain that a lack of discipline is a major problem in the eyes of the American public as this issue has been ranked as the highest concern every year since 1969 in Gallup polls of public attitudes about education. However, the American Association of School Administrators

(1980) mailed a survey to 18,000 of its members and of more than 2,000 questionnaires returned, most respondents revealed that discipline was not the most serious problem confronting their district, but finances and money.

In researching a paper to present to the National Governors Association, McCart (1994) identified several significant risk factors about children and violent behavior: chronic parental unemployment; substance abuse; early onset of aggression and antisocial behavior; family characteristics such as poor parenting skills; inconsistent discipline; child abuse and out-of-home placements; inappropriate peer relationships; victimization; poor school performance; co-occurrence of problem behaviors; and living in socially isolated neighborhoods that failed to meet basic needs.

McCart(1994) affirmed that violence often results from a complex interaction of environmental, social, and psychological factors. Among these factors are the learned behavior of responding to conflict with violence, the effects of drugs or alcohol, the presence of weapons, the absence of positive family relationships and adult supervision.

Just as gangs were a part of the beginning of violence in schools, (Gaustad, 1990) contends that gangs still are an integral part of student discipline problems. Gangs are more violent than ever and are spreading to new locations. Defense of turf (the control of a physical territory) can lead to extreme violence. Turf lines are normally drawn in the neighborhoods, but gang rivalries also have a devastating impact on schools. Often, even non-gang members begin bringing weapons to school for protection (Gaustad, 1990).

Of special concern to McCart (1994) is the way violence impacts children's early development. Children who are exposed to violence often

have difficulty focusing on school work or engaging in other activities that are treasured experiences of childhood. Research suggests that chronic exposure to violence can have serious developmental consequences for children, including psychological disorders, grief and loss reactions, impaired intellectual development and school problems, truncated moral development, pathological adaptation to violence, and identification with the aggressor (McCart, 1994).

(Gaustad, 1992) believes that school discipline has two main goals: (1) ensure the safety of staff and students, and (2) create an environment conducive to learning. Serious student misconduct involving violent or criminal behavior defeats these goals. However, the most common discipline problems involve noncriminal student behavior.

Before school administrators can address these related issues of school violence, they must realize that, in some cases, they will be dealing with student and family problems that are beyond their ability to control or manage (Heller, 1996). The goal of today's schools must be to develop strategies and provide resources that will reduce acts of student violence, both in number and intensity.

There is a growing concern that classroom behavior in public school is out of hand (Fuhr, 1993). Teachers maintain that many parents have abdicated their parental role and are sending their discipline problems to school and even when schools assume such responsibilities, they often encounter criticism from the very persons who need to support their efforts: the parents (Fuhr, 1993). It is just as important for parents to support teachers as it is for teachers to help those parents who practice effective discipline in the home. The key to providing students with the skills,

knowledge, and motivation they require to become healthy adults is a comprehensive program that responds to the new risks and pressures that arise with each developmental stage (Grady, 1996). Addressing these risks requires a sustained effort over the child's entire school career.

Any school violence is too much, but it is disastrous to make policy on misinterpretation of data. Comparisons of violence in various settings indicate that schools are one of the safest institutions for children (Hyman, 1994). However, social policy which is driven by the media scares are based on exaggerated, distorted data and political "sound bytes" about unsafe schools, thus citizen panic only drives us deeper into a cycle of increasing punitive solutions (Hyman, 1994). McCart (1994) found that the causes of violence are complex and that solutions require a multidimensional approach. Effective interventions should address the needs of individuals, families schools, and communities in order to have a significant impact on violent behaviors.

Finding a cure for violence is a serious challenge for schools, parents, and communities (Newman, 1991). Like many health problems, those associated with violence are potentially contagious for the following reasons: (a) for many the tendency to violence is learned, (b) violence is frequently enabled by the use of alcohol and other drugs, but most often alcohol, (c) the incidence of violence can be reduced through appropriate education programs, and (d) for educational programs to reduce violence, they must involve and generate support from all levels of the community (Newman, 1991).

Despite the current concern over disruptive student behavior, the topic of classroom management is one of the most misunderstood issues in

(Jones & Jones, 1981). A major reason for teachers' inability to satisfactorily resolve their concerns regarding classroom discipline is that the topic is so often approached from a nearsighted, arbitrary perspective. Rather than assisting teachers to understand the issues involved in effective classroom management, most material provides teachers with unidimensional strategies for solving discipline problems after they occur (Jones & Jones, 1981).

Short, Short, and Blanton (1994) suggest that there is a relationship between teacher-discipline philosophy and school discipline and that educators vary along a continuum of beliefs about the way children learn to behave. They believe that students are relatively passive receptacles of knowledge who learn best when there is a clear payoff for learning. "At one extreme are custodial educators that seem to emphasize the individual student. V. R. Jones and L. S. Jones (1981) found that today's teachers view "classroom discipline as a key issue that influences what are perhaps the two most important aspects of their professional lives: (1) the degree to which their students develop personal and cognitive skills and (2) the degree to which teachers enjoy their jobs" (p. 9).

Related Discipline Concerns in Schools and Communities

Bybee and Gee (1982) reported the results of a survey of parents and educators to list the major reasons for the lack of discipline in schools and the responses were, in order of greatest concern, "drug use, poor curriculum, large schools, pupil's lack of interest, and alcohol use" (p. 101). Smith and Rivera (1995) cited reasons such as low teacher salaries, insufficient funding for education, lack of parental support, and a disregard for authority by students for the lack of discipline in school settings. Many problems are

beyond the control of educators, but must not be used as an excuse for why discipline problems can not be improved. All of these problems are factors contributing to the phenomenon of violence faced by school personnel (Bybee & Gee, 1982, p. 101).

School discipline is also romanticized and exaggerated. Gordon (1995) is of the opinion that adults, especially older adults, tend to "remember schools and school settings that never really existed. The public also tends to believe that teachers should be able to discipline and control students "like they controlled us when we were in school." Because of this popular belief, it is assumed that when this type of authority is exercised in school, the public and parents will express their agreement and lend their support. Sadly, this scenario does not hold true (Gordon, 1995).

Methods of dealing with school discipline are often determined according to a particular definition. Smith and Rivera (1993) have defined school discipline as"....order among pupils so learning can take place without competition from unproductive factors. It is a system of rules for conduct and a mechanism for ensuring that conduct codes are followed" (p. 1). Another interpretation of school discipline is offered by V. F. Jones and L. S. Jones (1981) to be: "the application of teaching strategies that facilitate optimal learning and personal growth by responding to the personal, psychological and academic needs of individual students and the classroom group" (p. 9).

Heller (1996) asserts that well-disciplined schools do not happen by accident. School personnel value and use successful practices, such as practices used in other schools and proven in research. They realize that appropriate school discipline must be a part of every program, curriculum, and practice. Knox (1996) submits that successful schools identify clear,

concise, and relevant curriculum goals. Curriculum is viewed as a "living document" that requires periodic and timely evaluation and modification. According to Hartzell and Petrie (1992), a school's organizational structure is reflective of its culture and that principals can introduce or develop structure that will support positive student behavior patterns. Among their suggestions are curriculum and grouping patterns, communication links between school populations, and the centralization or decentralization of discipline.

Knox (1996) affirms that schools that focus on specific curriculum goals become totally student-oriented through both instructional and non-instructional programs. Programs are instituted for the benefit of the students and staff members appreciate and understand their role as student advocates. Student management programs in these schools emphasize positive student behaviors, student responsibility and preventive measures, rather than punitive actions to address student misbehavior (Knox, 1996).

The entire school organization must be designed to support and encourage student responsibility and to address those issues and behaviors that are not conducive to instructional and academic success because well-disciplined schools would rather "catch students doing something right" than catch them doing something wrong (Heller, 1996).

Short et al. (1994) concluded that successful school discipline is achieved through framing discipline as an organizational issue. Understanding teacher and student behavior as part of a larger organizational context provides a better opportunity to identify causes of poor student discipline and to structure more effective means for dealing with the causes. Within the organizational context, V. F. Jones and L. S. Jones (1981) found norms to have an impact in influencing students' behavior. Norms, by their

definition, are common beliefs concerning what is acceptable or appropriate behavior. It is their position that classroom norms are important because a student's academic achievement is significantly influenced by the degree to which students in the class accept and apply behaviors that support the learning process. Further, "learning will be less likely to occur when a significant number of students or several influential students hold values and reinforce behaviors that do not support the teacher's learning goals" (p. 69).

Gordon (1995) believes that when it becomes necessary for a school to discipline a student, by definition, this act must cause the student some discomfort through either loss of freedom or privilege, physical discomfort, or some form of exclusion. However, not only are parents objecting more to punishment imposed by schools, but also are seeking relief from the courts. The courts have tended to uphold many of the traditional notions of school discipline, measuring those notions with the common law yardstick of reasonableness (Gordon, 1995).

When federal laws and regulations do not exist in an area, it falls upon the courts to become arbiters and act to balance competing interests through an interpretation of existing laws (Yell & Peterson, 1996). The lack of federal guidelines on discipline procedures has resulted in numerous court cases, which have led to the formation of a body of case law.

The Supreme Court of the United States has declared that students in the public schools today enjoy constitutional rights tantamount to those that have long been recognized for their parents (Bybee & Gee, 1982). A public school student comes to school clothed with constitutional rights, and these rights are not left at "the school house gate." "Only with the threat of

material and substantial disruption of the educational process will these rights yield" (p. 23).

Gaustad (1992) said that the current direction of courts has resulted in a much more protective view toward the constitutional rights of students. The view resulted with the First and Fourteenth Amendments guaranteeing freedom of speech, the right to worship (or not worship), to gather in groups peacefully, protection from unreasonable search and seizure, and provide that rights of students to property and liberty can not be taken away without due process of law (Gaustad, 1992).

The courts will not become involved with the "wisdom or unwisdom" of school rules, the students and community will. Gordon (1995) contends that students, by definition, are immature and though they desire structure and trust, they will react with immaturity to rules and regulations they consider unfair. Professional educators, on the other hand, must be able to maintain an orderly and safe climate that is conducive to learning.

Knox (1996) wrote that students should be informed of their rights, responsibilities, and obligations as productive citizens in a democratic society. School leaders, however, will often find themselves "torn between the philosophy of the student as a person and the fact that in the minds of students, staff, and parents all students should be treated exactly the same, regardless of the circumstances involved" (p. 7).

Kaufman and Center (1989) believe that the nature of disciplinary problems has been changing over the past three decades with significantly more concern over direct physical or verbal expressions or aggression. Problem behaviors strongly suggest the need for positive interventions to

reduce the occurrence of both common and serious problems. "Effective management of discipline problems is rarely a part of the formal training of most school administrators" (p. 12). Effectiveness of learning can best be enhanced if disruptive behaviors are identified quickly and strategies devised to counteract them (Mishra, 1992).

Heller (1996) supports a position that sometimes the key to a successful intervention with a student is his or her understanding and realization that "someone really listened and took their concerns and problems into consideration" (p. 5). Schools with good discipline have programs, strategies, and philosophies that support and value student responsibility and proper citizenship as fundamental components of good discipline. Everything a school does, from curriculum to co-curricular activities and staff hiring practices, must take into consideration that instruction can not occur without good discipline (Heller, 1996).

According to Gaustad (1992) the legal context of school discipline has become a prominent consideration in the design of any system of rules and sanctions and in administering punishment in all public schools today. One might expect that the legal influence has had the effect of standardizing procedures for dealing with student misconduct.

There has been a continuum of discourse about the violence in public schools. At one extreme, conservatives depict these schools as sites of total anarchy. At the other extreme, liberals chide those concerned about school violence by unearthing examples of how bad public schools were at the beginning of this century (Shen, 1997). On one point, however, nearly everyone can agree: "With the generally declining role of churches and families in educating children and youth, schools are playing an increasingly

important role, especially for disadvantaged students" (p. 20). Thus it is more imperative than ever that our schools be safe havens--places that are conducive to learning and preparing for the future. For some students, schools are the only safe havens in their lives (Shen, 1997).

Special Education Laws and Special Services

Since personnel in school districts first began paying attention to student discipline and what to do about it, most efforts have been directed towards regular education students (Smith & Rivera, 1996). Those students in special education that exhibited behavior problems were placed with regular education classes. Unfortunately, this was the beginning of many problems for both regular and special education students (Smith & Rivera, 1996).

The Council of Administrators of Special Education and the Council for Children with Behavior Disorders (1995) believe that the majority of the violent and aggressive students in United States schools are not students receiving special education, but students whose behavior may be incidental to a particular emotional crisis. Most students who have cognitive, emotional, social, or behavioral disabilities are effectively managed and taught through special education interventions, and rarely exhibit the violent behavior that places them and those around them in danger of harm (Council for Children with Behavior Disorders and Council of Administrators of Special Education, 1995).

Smith and Rivera (1996) concluded that today's educators must consider many factors when planning discipline programs such as students' culture and verbal diversity or disabilities. Educators from various fields including special education, general education, counseling and remedial

reading must work collaboratively to accommodate the needs of all students. Smith and Rivera (1996) continued by saying that as students with disabilities spend more of their school day in the general education setting, "special education and general education professionals must develop discipline plans collaboratively. General education teachers need to be comfortable with the needs of students with disabilities, as they implement their discipline programs" (p. 2).

The use of disciplinary procedures with students with disabilities in school has proven to be a very controversial issue (Yell & Peterson, 1996). Although the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and regulations implementing these laws are quite detailed, there are no specific guidelines for the use of disciplinary procedures (Hartwig & Reusch, 1994). The lack of guidelines has led to uncertainty among school administrators and teachers regarding proper procedures for disciplining students with disabilities (Yell & Peterson, 1996).

There is nothing in IDEA which restricts schools from disciplining children with disabilities. Some would say that by not addressing these dangerous behaviors, the student with special needs is not receiving an appropriate education (Dwyer, 1996). IDEA procedural safeguards were designed to assure that students with disabilities were not "arbitrarily removed from their parent-approved program without consent and were guaranteed a free and appropriate public education with the least restrictive environment" (p. 2).

In disciplining students, Yell and Peterson (1996) believe it is important to recognize which students are protected under either the IDEA or Section 504 and to treat them accordingly. "Administrators, teachers, and

school board members should acknowledge that a dual standard of discipline does exist (p. 365). Maloney (1994) argued that a claim by administrators that all students are treated equally in terms of discipline will not be convincing to a court because students with disabilities do have special protections against certain types of disciplinary procedures.

Since students in today's schools are not always perfectly well-behaved, it is necessary for school administrators, from time to time, to take disciplinary action (Osborne, 1994). Some of these disciplinary actions result in a loss of privileges for the student, but do not result in a loss of educational opportunity. "Sometimes more severe sanctions are necessary, that do result in a loss of educational privileges such as suspensions and expulsions" (p. 1).

Almost all students exhibit some kind of discipline problem or disruptive behavior during their 13-year school career. It is the kind, degree, place, and amount of disruption that determine whether the behavior requires a comprehensive discipline plan (Smith & Rivera, 1995). In fact, it is often mistakenly assumed that a reason for the increased violence in public schools is directly related to the increased number of students with disabilities being educated within their local public school environment (The Council for Children with Behavior Disorders and The Council of Administrators of Special Education, 1995). Within the regulations implementing the IDEA there is a stay-put provision. This provision requires that a student remain in his or her current placement if the parent(s) are in disagreement with a proposed change of placement. The provision also requires that "the student stay-put through the time necessary for due process and subsequent evaluations to determine the appropriate placement for the student" (p. 2).

Smith and Rivera (1995) believe that some students are the source of considerable disruption. Many of these students have disabilities and are included in regular classes. They seem unable to meet the behavioral expectations of typical classroom situations for extended periods of time. Their inability to conform, their frequent frustration over learning activities, and the recognition by their peers that they are "different often lead to disruptive situations" (p. 3).

Students with disabilities are not the only students who are dangerous and disruptive (Bader, 1997). There are no clear data that demonstrate that they have behavior problems disproportionate to their numbers in the total population of students. However, the states of New York and Delaware and the city of Milwaukee compiled data to suggest that "disabled students might participate in more violent acts than their numbers would suggest" (p. 4). Nevertheless, the application of IDEA and court cases dealing with discipline issues have created convoluted and ambiguous guidelines, lenient and overly broad interpretations of what constitutes a manifestation, and expensive, time-consuming requirements, in addition to the stiff punishments for districts that accompany losses in court when the discipline of disabled students is disputed by parents resulting in doubt and uncertainty making districts hesitant to act (Bader, 1997).

In school disciplinary matters, all students have rights based on the due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. The two general areas of due process protection are procedural and substantive (Yell & Peterson, 1996). Procedural due process involves the fairness of disciplinary methods and procedures. The purpose of these protections is not to shield students from properly imposed suspension; it is to

protect them from mistaken exclusion from school. Substantive due process requires that school rules to regulate student behavior be reasonable.

Students with disabilities facing disciplinary sanctions have additional rights that place extra due process requirements on school officials. Courts have consistently held that school districts may not impose the severe disciplinary sanction of expulsion on a student with disabilities unless additional due process procedures have been provided to the student (Osborne, 1994). Parents are filing for due process protections to invoke the IDEA's stay-put provisions, charging that school districts are "breaking the law" if they immediately remove a student, for this legally constitutes a change in educational placement which can not occur without parental permission (The Council for Children with Behavior Disorders and The Council of Administrators of Special Education, 1995). Nationwide, this controversy has led to a growing resentment by school officials regarding what many see as an "inappropriate and unfair dual discipline system allowing students with disabilities to receive special treatment and protection when they commit a violent act on school property" (p. 2).

The U. S. Supreme Court in Honig v. Doe (1988) ruled that normal disciplinary procedures typically used for dealing with students, such as restriction of privileges, detention, and removal of students to study carrels, may be used with students with disabilities (Yell & Peterson, 1996). A significant limitation exists, however, against certain types of discipline that may result in a unilateral decision for change in placement. Disciplinary procedures may be placed into one of three categories to clarify legal and illegal practices. The three categories are: (a) permitted procedures include those practices that are part of a school district's disciplinary plan and that

are commonly used with all students. These procedures are unobtrusive and do not result in a change of placement or the denial of the right to an education, (b) controlled procedures include those interventions that the courts have held to be permissible as long as they are used appropriately and not abused and are not used in a discriminatory manner, (c) prohibited procedures include disciplinary procedures that result in a unilaterally made change in placement are prohibited such as expulsions or indefinite suspensions (Yell & Peterson, 1996).

In today's schools, mild, positive forms of intervention are being used when preventive measures have proven unsuccessful. The use of severe and negative measures should be kept at a minimum to avoid a serious long-term impact on the climate of the school, overuse of punitive techniques, and the perception that the one who administers the negative procedure is a punitive person (Smith & Rivera, 1996).

The most important technique for promoting a climate for learning is to match the disciplinary infraction with the intervention. It is important for educators be fully aware of the many different intervention techniques and intervene systematically and sensibly. Smith and Rivera (1996) formulated an idea called, "The Intervention Ladder" that graphically depicts a hierarchy of disciplinary interventions that can be used as a guide for selecting an appropriate, disciplinary action.

The ladder is a sixteen-step order of tactics, beginning with specific praise that provides students with positive statements and feedback about their appropriate behavior. From here, the progression leads to a classroom determining a code of conduct, group involvement, peer management,

self-management, parent action, time-out, and lastly, a multi-level punishment phase (Smith & Rivera, 1996).

Butera, McMullen and Henderson (1997) reported on a program developed for special education students called The Individual Education Plan (IEP) to create highly personalized plans to meet individual needs. IEP's were developed via multidisciplinary team process with substantial parental and student input. IEP process should serve the purpose of developing long term goals and short term objectives that address specific student learning needs and direct instructional planning. The IEP is to guide placement decisions as well as specify evaluation processes and criteria. These critical functions of the IEP are pivotal in safeguarding students' rights to free and appropriate public education (FAPE) (Butera et al., 1997)

Few issues in special education currently generate more discussion, confusion or apprehension than the topic of "full inclusion" (Tompkins & Cooper, 1993). Despite the controversy and debate surrounding this issue, political and other pressures are moving the nation in the direction of serving disabled and other at-risk students in the mainstream. The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 embraced two hallmark components with "free, appropriate public education" and "least restrictive environment." Full inclusion is clearly a movement that addresses the second component whereas, the issue of appropriateness remains a major concern. It is certain that "unless adaptations occur in regular education, there is little likelihood that students being returned to the mainstream will be any more successful than they were before the advent of special classes" (Stainback & Stainback, 1989, p.49).

Yell and Peterson (1996) conclude that the discipline of students with disabilities is one of the most difficult legal issues confronting administrators and teachers. Disciplinary actions against students with disabilities are subject to rules and limitations different from those applicable to students without disabilities. It is crucial that administrators know what students are protected under the IDEA and Section 504 and plan discipline accordingly. Awareness of the law on disciplining students with disabilities is important if schools are to avoid legal challenges to their policies and procedures (Yell & Peterson, 1996).

With greater demands for more inclusive schools, general education teachers are seeing a higher rate of integration of students with disabilities in their classrooms, particular since these students are entering at all levels in the school systems. One result is a greater diversity of ability, motivation, skills, and achievement (Smith & Rivera, 1996). This diversity does bring with it higher levels of disruption, which can negatively impact the learning environment. All teachers, and particularly those working in inclusive classrooms, must work diligently to ensure that students receive as much instructional time as possible (p. 14).

Without direct attention to this factor, positive instructional time can drop to extremely low levels and negatively influence students' academic achievements. High levels of disruption can alter the positive learning environment, remove the teacher from instruction, and result in classroom chaos (Smith & Rivera, 1996).

Impact of Suspensions, Expulsions, and Drop-Outs

If students are considered educationally disabled under IDEA or if they are considered disabled under Section 504, administrators and teachers face a

different set of rules and limitations in using disciplinary procedures than they face with non-disabled students (Yell & Peterson, 1996). A student is considered disabled under IDEA if he or she has a disability covered by IDEA that adversely affects his or her education. Students with disabilities who are not covered under IDEA, as well as those students covered by the law, are protected under Section 504. This includes students with disabilities not identified by IDEA, such as students with certain types of behavioral disorders as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, communicable diseases, and temporary disabilities (p. 365). Students defined as disabled under Section 504 can now be disciplined for alcohol or drug abuse to the same extent that students without disabilities can be disciplined. However, this may not be true for these students if they are covered under IDEA (Yell & Peterson, 1996).

Two studies (Cooley, 1995 & Penrod, 1994) completed for the Kansas State Board of Education (KSBE) have provided important information about violence among students and the frequency of and basis for suspensions and expulsions in the school population. A group of 34 individuals consisting of secondary level building administrators, directors of special education, parents, special education certified high school instructional staff, school psychologists, and community members that participated in the project shared personal stories, discussed school problems, and suggested possible remedies (Mellard & Seybert, 1996).

The KSBE had previously researched this issue and this groups' discussions confirmed most of what they had discovered. Both parties agreed that students' misbehavior were increasing, that many school officials felt

uncomfortable about the increase and its ripple effect on related issues, that the issues consumed energy that could otherwise be available for other valuable educational resources, and that the outstanding accomplishments of students who did not present behavioral problems were often obscured or reduced in the public's perception (cited in Mellard & Seybert, 1996).

Both studies revealed that students in special education were disproportionately represented in the number of students suspended or expelled. In fact, even though students with disabilities represented only 11% of all students in Kansas, they were significantly over-represented in the number of suspensions and expulsions, being twice as likely to be suspended or expelled as non-disabled students. Even more significant was the fact that students with behavior disorders were 11 times as likely to be suspended or expelled and students with learning disabilities were almost two and a half times as likely to be suspended or expelled as their non-disabled peers (cited in Mellard & Seybert, 1996).

Although most of the 34 participants agreed with Cooley's 1995 report that students in special education were disproportionately suspended and expelled from school, some participants disagreed. Those who disagreed believed that the "due process" regulations overprotected students with disabilities from suspension and expulsion. The "dual" set of legal standards, one for students without disabilities and the other for students with disabilities, created confusion among educators about suspensions and expulsions. As a result, many educators have tended to "back off" in their interactions with students with disabilities, especially with regard to suspensions and expulsions (cited in Mellard & Seybert, 1996).

Students who exhibit recurrent discipline problems in school often display other characteristics that distinguish them from their classmates (Short et al., 1994). In addition to differing from discipline norms, they may be low achievers and show little interest in school activities. In fact, these aspects occur together so frequently that they may offer a reasonable description of a current and familiar educational concern: the at-risk student. Because at-risk students constitute a complex and difficult educational problem, school discipline in relation to this group may raise special concerns (Short et al., 1994, p. 73).

Henderson and Friedland (1996, p. 16) found increasing rates of reported youth violence and crime have exerted pressure on schools to respond. Violence within schools has become a focal point for national media. In response, schools are caught between providing learning environments and assuring the rights of all students, including those who may have committed violent acts. "Students who misbehave in schools are frequently suspended, although there is evidence that out-of-school suspension is ineffective in changing student behavior" (p. 16).

Fasko, Grubb, and Osborne (1995) found that school personnel attempt to control student behavior through a variety of behavior management methods, but often resort to punitive methods of discipline such as corporal punishment, suspension and expulsion. Many school districts have been advised for years that corporal punishment has caused some school districts to take the advice of professionals in the field and their insurance companies to abolish the use of corporal punishment (Fasko et al., 1995).

Short et al. (1994) reported the United States is one of the few developed nations in the world that continues to condone corporal

punishment. Over 30 states either authorize the practice of corporal punishment or have taken no stand concerning its use. Only 16 states have legislation against the practice of corporal punishment. "Corporal punishment seems to be an accepted educational practice in the United States" (p. 83). Despite American failure to proscribe corporal punishment, the practice continues to be questioned by researchers and professionals. A complex and emotional issue, corporal punishment also arouses disagreement and debate among educators and the public (Short et al., 1994).

Children at-risk of school failure can be helped. They can also be overlooked (Meyer, 1997). Every day the most committed and dedicated teachers watch helplessly as some of their students fall further behind. Harried administrators routinely confront small crises and countless demands on their time that keep the problems of at-risk students low on their to do lists. Parents of at-risk students are often very concerned, but they are "handcuffed by little education themselves and the ongoing struggle simply to survive" (p. 312). Short et al. (1994) identified many discipline programs for at-risk students focused on changing students identified as potential failures. However, such interventions may neglect the complex, systemic nature of the problem, and therefore may misidentify the problem. Identifying and intervening with at-risk students may increase their "alienation to school with only minimal impact on discipline problems" (Short et al., 1994, p. 74).

In the absence of corporal punishment, suspension is often used by school personnel. Suspension, as a form of punishment, has serious educational implications because suspension removes the student from school (Fasko et al., 1995). This can cause the student to be estranged from the school which might increase the likelihood of dropping out of school and it

can cause a burden on the community, if youth are not in school and go unsupervised, possibly committing acts of vandalism and suspensions which remove the student from a school's learning environment (Fasko et al., 1995).

Student Groups Causing Major Discipline Problems

Blendinger (1993) prepared a booklet presenting an approach to school discipline that blended the best features of existing successful programs and current research findings. The publication is written in story form about two beginning teachers who realize that their success depends on quickly establishing good classroom discipline. After several unsuccessful attempts, they were led to a middle school principal who had been hired a few years earlier to turn around a school that was reputed to have students who neither achieved nor behaved. The story describes a system called "Win-Win Discipline" that transformed the school into one recognized for its exemplary academic achievement and discipline.

In their search, the two teachers learned of five key steps the middle school principal used successfully at her school for discipline control. The key steps were: (a) develop a discipline plan, (b) establish classroom rules, (c) determine consequences for violating rules, (d) recognize and reward good behavior, and (e) involve parents in their children's behavior. The two teachers successfully formulated a discipline management plan of their own that permitted them to maintain control of their classroom (Blendinger, 1993).

Teachers' working environments are becoming less desirable because of threats of verbal and physical assaults (Calabrese, 1986). Violence has taken over first place as one of society's greatest concerns and is identified as the biggest problem facing our schools (Elam, Rose, & Gallup, 1994).School

educators are seeing a need to add violence-prevention programs in the curriculum (Johnson & Johnson, 1995). Enger (1995) reported that in a rural Mississippi River delta community, a violence-prevention program was implemented into the health education curriculum for middle school students in the seventh grade. The program was an adaptation of the Prothrow-Stith (1987) Violence Prevention: Curriculum for Adolescents and was introduced as a primary intervention for students to become aware of the consequences of violence and strategies to dissuade violent behavior and addressed the key principles identified in the best school programs in conflict resolution (Johnson & Johnson, 1995).

The objective of this investigation was to examine the effects of a violence-prevention program on student acquisition of knowledge about violence (Enger, 1995). Student behavior, background, and academic achievement were also examined to determine their relationship to what they knew and learned about violence. A randomized two-group, pre-test/post-test design was administered over a four-week period using six classes of seventh graders. The curriculum was presented in eight units containing: violence in society; homicide; risk factors; anger; expressing anger; fighting; what leads to fighting; and alternatives to fighting.

After testing was completed and the results were tabulated, it was obvious that the program was a success. The students that participated in the program increased their awareness of the destructive force of violence and felt they were better prepared to recognize potentially explosive situations. Plans were made to include more students in the next program (Enger, 1995).

Henderson and Friedland (1996) conducted a qualitative telephone survey investigating the attitudes and perceptions of teachers and

administrators of middle and secondary schools regarding suspension used as a disciplinary measure. Survey questions explored such areas as most recent and most typical behaviors leading to suspension, communication, understanding of fairness, effectiveness of the discipline codes, and the possible relationship between suspension and dropping out before graduation. Findings revealed that the reasons for use of out-of-school suspension are "often not related to student violence, and that practitioners do not believe that suspension is either effective or equitably administered" (p. 16). School personnel expressed that they often feel stymied in their attempts to address individual student needs by policy mandated from the top down. Of particular concern is the frequency with which students with disabilities are suspended and an apparent hesitancy to utilize and modify the Individual Education Planning (IEP) process to monitor misbehavior (Henderson & Friedland, 1996).

Hyman, Weiler, Dahbany, Shanock and Britton (1994) believe that discipline programs that emanate from individual teachers tend not to be very successful because there can be such wide variances from the teachers that implement the programs. As a result, Hyman et al. (1994) developed their individually tailored Teacher Variance model. Teacher Variance is based on the assumption, backed by research, that there is no one best way to handle discipline. The group believes the reasons for misbehavior may best be understood within the framework of theory and research. Discipline is most effective when the underlying theory is compatible with the individual teacher's system, teaching style and personality. Teachers need to find the discipline orientation with which they are most comfortable. The training, which was developed during almost fifteen years of presenting all-day

workshops to teachers, administrators, psychologists, and other child care workers (Hyman, Lally, Lennox, Marchon, Pokalo, & Klein, 1994), helps teachers apply a theory-driven approach to practical problems. Teachers are not required to change their belief systems.

The Teacher Variance contains five behavioral orientations, each of which is grounded in a separate body of assumptions about how children's personalities and behaviors develop. Therefore, within a particular system, one derives an understanding of how personality disorders and misbehavior develop and how to treat problems (Hyman et al., 1994). Through the Teacher Variance Inventory educators identify their own theoretical orientation to discipline. They learn how to consistently apply the theory to solve discipline problems. When a particular technique, rooted in theory, does not work, they will return to the theory to understand why it did not work, rather than willy-nilly trying something else.

Teacher Variance does not suggest that educators should know only one theory. The goal for any professional who wants to be the complete disciplinarian is to understand all of the approaches, and to be able to use those which are most effective in specific situations (Hyman et al., 1994).

The in-school suspension program is widely accepted disciplinary practice, as many schools attempt to cope with an increasing number of disciplinary problems. Whitfield and Bulach (1996) conducted a study to evaluate the effectiveness of a similar program at a suburban Atlanta high school. Data were derived from a questionnaire that explored staff's and students' perceptions of the effectiveness of the in-school suspension program (ISSP). Responses were received from 70 staff members and 190 students. Fifty percent of the students reported that they preferred out-of-school

suspension to in-school suspension, and 60 % preferred in-school suspension to detention. Seventy percent of the students perceived the ISSP as punitive and 70 % of staff did not believe that participation in the ISSP improved students' attitudes (Whitfield & Bulach, 1996).

Findings indicate that the program was not as effective as it could have been and would be more effective if: (a) the administration and ISSP director played a stronger leadership role (b) the entire faculty and staff increased their support of the ISSP and were more involved in the program's operation and (c) communication between the ISSP director and faculty improved regarding students' assignments, behavior, progress, and return to the classroom (Whitfield & Bulach, 1996). A key finding of this research is that students prefer out-of school suspension (OSS) to in-school suspension (ISS) and in-school suspension to detention. The administration and faculty must reverse this preference otherwise, they are only creating a situation where students disobey decisions of their choosing. In short, they could be teaching students to ignore their decisions (Whitfield & Bulach, 1996).

During World War I, it was said that the British War Office kept three separate casualty lists: a false set to deceive the public, a second false set to deceive the War Cabinet, and a third false set to deceive itself. Something similar might be said about United States dropout rates (Fossey, 1996). The U.S. Department of Education and various education commentators maintain that dropout rates have been going down for African Americans and the school population as a whole. "Unfortunately, multiple definitions of the term dropout among states and school systems, inaccurate reporting, and a lack of standardized reporting procedures make it difficult to know for sure whether this assertion is true" (p. 140). In fact, there is disturbing evidence that, in

some settings at least, dropout rates are higher than generally reported and may be going up (Fossey, 1996).

Sinclair, Christenson, Thurlow, and Evelo (1994) recognize that dropping out of school as a critical educational problem. School dropouts are a significant cost to our educational system, to social programs, and to our nation as a world competitor. Reducing the occurrence of dropping out is identified as a critical education goal for our nation. "When looking at dropout rates today, the problem is particularly great among youth with learning or emotional-behavioral disabilities" (p. 3).

Sinclair et al. (1994) noted that the dropout problem in the United States is worse in some areas and certain populations of students. High-risk areas include the southern and western regions of the country, and large urban centers. High-risk populations include youth who are from low-income households, non-European American backgrounds, single parent families, and/or have disabilities. When analysis control for differences in high-risk, such as gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status is considered, youth with disabilities appear to be at greatest risk for school failure. Students with disabilities leave school without graduating at much higher rates than other students.

Attendance and grade retention policies often are exclusionary in practice. Of particular concern are school policies that have automatic consequences for absenteeism, such that unexcused absences result in automatic failure, out-of-school suspension, or non-promotion to the next grade. While such practices are quite common, they contribute to high dropout rates. Grade retention is largely a response to policy guidelines to hold back youth for remediation who show academic discrepancies, including

course failure. Yet, non-promotion is a variable found to correlate highly with incidences of dropping out (Sinclair et al., 1994).

French (1991) is in agreement that negative attendance policies can be very damaging to some students' futures. A school's discipline and attendance policies greatly influence a school's climate and the message students receive about their acceptance within the school. "These policies set the tone for how students approach the teaching and learning process, as well as students' sense of the school as a supportive and caring community" (p. 4). School policies can promote a positive and inclusive school climate in which all students fulfill their learning potential.

Discipline and attendance policies set limits upon what is expected an allowable behavior within the school community, while determining consequences for breaking the rules. "These policies can also help students understand their behavior, solve problems, and develop positive strategies for managing daily life and for being a productive member of the school community" (p. 8). Orderly environments and high attendance rates directly affect the quality of a school's climate, the delivery of instruction, and the relationships among members of the school community (French, 1991).

In another area of considerable concern for many school districts, Monahan (1992) and Stradford (1993) developed and implemented transition to high school programs for incoming at-risk, ninth-grade students to increase school success. Each program was designed to assist the students to acquire the knowledge, motivation, interest, and skills necessary to make a successful transition to high school. What was just as important was to have programs in place to keep the ninth grade students in school to continue to graduation. At the school Stradford (1993) studied, it was noted that approximately

15 % of the ninth and tenth-grade students had a variety of problems, including excessive failing grades, tardiness and absences, discipline problems, lack of self-esteem, and limited participation in school and non-school activities. Aimed at providing students with success experiences and support services, program components included group and individual counseling sessions, field trips, peer tutoring, community speakers, teacher inservice training, career education, parent workshops, and business mentors. As a result of the program, the school dropout rate decreased from 7.2% in 1990-1991 to 1.6 % in June, 1993 for a 78 % decline. There was also a significant drop in failing grades during the same time period and a noticeable improvement in attitudes towards academics (Stradford, 1993).

At a high school where Monahan (1992) had designed a practicum to assist 62 incoming, at-risk, ninth-grade students in their transition to high school, the primary objectives were to reduce the number of disciplinary infractions; decrease school absences; involve more of the students in school related activities; and increase student awareness of study skills, career education services, and counseling assistance. Upper class volunteers were assigned to the ninth graders to serve as role models while assisting the at-risk students with transitional concerns. Group guidance sessions served to define school policies and programs, group counseling was provided, study skills were taught, career sessions were provided, tutoring assistance was available, and social activities were organized. The practicum involved teachers, students, counselors, and parents in easing transitional difficulties. Analysis of data revealed that the program was successful in meeting its objectives (Monahan, 1992).

Suggested Solutions to Student Discipline Problems

The growing recognition of youth violence in schools is creating corresponding waves of intervention strategies to deal with the problem. Administrators' first responses to escalating violence typically include such initiatives as installing metal detectors, implementing "zero tolerance programs, and increasing the number of security guards. A second set of initiatives involves teachers in implementing school-wide programs such as instruction in conflict resolution and anger management or in using what some refer to as "off-the-shelf" curriculum packages that deal with violent behavior (Kauffman & Burbach, 1997).

Another program that a growing number of state legislatures are mandating for the school districts in their state is the creation of an alternative education program (AEP), including alternative education settings for behavioral management (Cortez, 1997). These programs were intended to address concerns raised by classroom teachers. "Many teachers expressed the need for student disciplinary options that would allow them to remove from their classes students who were engaged in serious misbehavior" (p. 10). State policy states that students may be removed to alternative education programs if they engage in conduct punishable as a felony or if they commit a series of specified serious offenses while on school property or while attending a school sponsored or school-related activity on or off school property. The statue also provided for students to be removed to an AEP, if they commit other violations specified in student "codes of conduct" developed by local school districts (Cortez, 1997).

The North Carolina Education and Law Project (1996) suggests to policy-makers and educators to draw on lessons learned through research and

the experience of other school systems. The most important quality of an effective alternative school is that placement is voluntary. "Individualized learning is stressed with small classes, highly skilled and motivated teachers and additional staff to provide developmental support" (p. 6). The schools in or near a regular school facility, have a well-defined mission and provides a program that is both therapeutic and academically challenging. The school climate is characterized by a well-defined discipline system, mutual respect, high expectations and a sense of a community. When students are placed for disciplinary reasons, the goal is to return them to their regular school (North Carolina Education and Law Project, 1996).

What began as a discussion on how to effectively address serious student offenders was quickly expanded to a much broader initiative to increase educators' prerogatives to remove any student considered to be disruptive (Cortez, 1997). At first glance, it appears that creating alternative educational settings for seriously disruptive students is a reasonable and necessary alternative, particularly if the other option is simply to expel students to roam unsupervised outside of the schools. For the small number of pupils who do engage in seriously disruptive behavior, removal to an AEP is appropriate. However, while being well intended by most people, these AEPs may also provide easy opportunities for schools to exile or track certain students who they may have given up on or written off (Cortez, 1997).

The authors of North Carolina Education and Law Project (1996) argue that alternative schools cost considerably more per student than do regular schools. Regular schools reduce their efforts to address discipline and behavior problems by changing the school culture, finding it easier simply to exclude "problem" students . Few students sent to alternative schools ever

return to their regular schools, and their likelihood of dropping out may even increase. Ineffective alternative schools consume resources that would have been better spent to improve regular schools. The perceived need for alternative schools to deal with "problem" students is as much about the failure of our schools as it is about the failure of parents and students. Before we create separate schools for these students, we need to ask whether we are doing all we can to prevent violence and discipline in our regular schools (North Carolina Education and Law Project, 1996).

In conversations with educators, it was discovered that some classroom teachers and school administrators perceive the alternative program referral prerogative as a "right" and bristle at the notion that anyone would question the effects of those practices (Cortez, 1997). While few would oppose the idea that teachers should have the right to remove seriously disruptive students, preliminary data released by the Texas Education Agency, for example, reveals an interesting trend. The majority of students who have been referred to AEPs were not referred for the more serious violations outlined in the education code. They were referred for reasons classified under the "local criteria" districts are allowed to prescribe (Cortez, 1997).

The large number of students enrolled in these programs and the large numbers of alternative education program schools created have even led to the development of "alternative accountability" mechanisms for those programs. Why these schools should be judged differently from the criteria applied to all other schools is a question that begs an answer. The alternative education program concept has been in place a sufficient amount of time to assess how it is working and, more specifically, whether or not students as a whole are benefiting from it.

Kauffman and Burbach (1997) see the need for another level of intervention to provide the kind of long-term reduction in violent behavior that we all hope for in schools. In their opinion, one of the most effective actions teachers can undertake--and the one with the most enduring results--is to create a climate of civility in their classrooms. One definition of civility has to do with civic responsibility--to be developed through training in the humanities that nourishes the exercise of citizenship. More pertinent to the discussion, however, is the definition of civility as politeness or courtesy.

Kauffman & Burbach (1997) perceive a decline in civility and see it as a serious threat to the well-being of students and teachers in schools. More specifically, the contention is that a major source of violence in schools is an interpersonal dysfunction that may begin with an unintended social blunder like, "What're you looking at?" or an accidental bump and, "Don't you ever touch me, man !" and end in a violent confrontation.

The creation of a culture of classroom civility is an enormous and complex undertaking. There will be setbacks and probably some moments of despair. Thus, the degree to which teachers are likely to succeed will be a function of their will to persist. Making schools more civil places requires commitment to civility in the face of uncivility. It is the only real hope for turning the tide against violence (Kauffman & Burbach, 1997).

PROCEDURES

Over the past twenty years, a great deal has been written by a number of educators, educational historians and researchers on the need to develop programs to address the escalating student discipline problems in the public schools in Texas. During this period, a great amount of time, money, and

effort have been expended to implement discipline-management programs that were put in place, in a rush, to meet the mandates of the Texas Education Agency and the Texas Legislature. These programs have not produced the kinds of results that their proponents had advocated. Personnel in school districts were at a great disadvantage in writing a successful plan because first, there were no successful models to analyze to avoid mistakes of previous programs and, secondly, what might work for one group of students might not be applicable to another group (e. g. special education students versus regular education students).

There was another problem facing reformers of school discipline and that was that most school boards looked at alternative discipline programs as a necessary evil. This was an additional heavy expense that was being forced upon them, without any chance of recourse, and their exasperation was transferred to the faculty and staff hired to work at alternative schools

In the initial start-up of many alternative schools, it was common place for the school to open without desks, text books, materials, supplies, and adequate staffing. Rarely was training provided for the new staff members to deal with a unique student population. When some training was forthcoming, it was usually presented by a central office administrator that knew less about the program than the staff members and was far less interested. Adding to an alternative school staffs' frustration was the overall attitude throughout many districts: (a) the students placed in an alternative school were 'bad' (b) the faculty and staff could not get a job in a 'real' school and (c) when a student was returned to a home campus and was unsuccessful, it was because the "people at AEP did not make the students do anything" and therefore, "were not disciplined." Adding to this frustration was the fact that very few, if any

of the teachers that complained ever visited an alternative school.

The purpose of this paper was not to counterattack complaints and criticisms of our alternative discipline program, but rather to develop a Discipline Management Plan with Guidelines and a Multi-Level Discipline Management System for the Phoenix Program, the alternative discipline program for the Azle Independent School District. The author's intentions were for both the plan and the system to be accepted by the school district as the primary programs to be used for current and future references, and to establish a goal of bringing together parents, students, teachers, administrators, and the community in a cooperative spirit and a realization that a successful alternative school can be very beneficial for everyone.

In interviews with parents, teachers, school administrators, a review of student records, and an analysis of student discipline referrals, a report was prepared to present to the central office administrators and the academic administrators in the district showing a general profile of the students placed in the Phoenix program. This report was presented prior to the development of this paper, so the Texas Woman's University Human Subjects Review Committee was not needed for approval. For the 1996-1997 school year: (a) a total of 150 students were placed in Phoenix, (b) 88 were high school students (58.7%), and (c) 62 were junior high students (41.3%).

A. A breakdown of the high school student data revealed: (d) 9th grade - 53 students (59.6%), (e) 10th grade - 23 students (26.2%), (f) 11th grade - 8 students (9.1%), and (g) 12th grade - 4 students (5.1%).

B. At the junior high level: (h) 19 students were 7th graders (31.4%) and (i) 43 students were 8th graders (68.6%).

C. The average length of placement was 41 school days.

D. Of 150 students, 74 were special education students (49.4%), 76 were regular education students (50.6%).

E. Of the 74 special education students, 36 were junior high students (48.6%) and 38 were high school students (51.4%).

F. Of the 62 junior high school students referred, 16 were referred for marijuana possession (25.8%).

G. Of the 88 high school students referred, 14 were referred for marijuana possession (15.9%) and 4 for alcohol related (4.5%).

H. 72 of the 150 referrals (47.7%) were for one form or another for classroom disruption (i.e., misconduct, persistent misbehavior, rules violations, verbal abuse to a teacher, and others).

I. The remaining 10% were placed for hazing, sexual remarks towards a teacher, felony arrest, truancy, theft at school and assault.

J. 355 Disciplinary Referral Forms were issued for the year: 172 referrals were issued to junior high students. Junior high students comprised 41.4% of Phoenix placements and 48.6% of the discipline referrals - 2.8 per student.

K. High school students accounted for 183 referrals which was 58.6% of Phoenix placements and 51.4% of the discipline referrals - 2.1 per student.

L. Special education students from the junior high were issued 118 referrals for 69.2% of the total.

M. Special education students from the high school were issued 94 referrals for 50.9% of the total.

N. The junior high and high school special education students that accounted for 49.4% of the total placements were responsible for 59.8% of the total discipline referrals.

O. At the high school, 9th grade students represented 59.6% of total placements and 58.6% of the referrals; 10th grade had 26.2% of placements, 34.2% of referrals; 11th grade had 9.1% of placements, 3.1% of referrals; and 12th grade had 5.1% of placements and 3.1% of placements.

P. At the junior high, 7th grade students were 31.4% of total placements and 13.6% of referrals and 8th grade students comprised 68.6% of placements and 86.4% of discipline referrals.

Q. Of the 150 students, only 10 were involved in any kind of extracurricular activity or less than 1% of the total placements.

R. 97 of the 150 students (64.7%) came from single parent/guardian homes.

S. The per-student ratio for referrals was higher for junior high students, even though a larger number of high school students was placed.

T. The data indicates a pattern of special education students being responsible for the majority of discipline referrals.

From the information gathered, surveys conducted, interviews and conversations with parents, teachers, administrators, and research, a Discipline Management Plan with Guidelines and a Multi-Level Discipline Management System were developed for the school district to be implemented to serve the needs of those students who experienced difficulties at their home campus (See Appendix).

CONCLUSIONS

For the past seven years that the author has been involved with alternative discipline programs with two school districts, many changes occurred which required new approaches and implementation of programs. As Head of middle school alternative discipline for the Birdville I. S. D. for

five years, there were several major changes because the alternative discipline programs were in their infancy, and in that time period, there were three new principals, each with a different approach to alternative discipline. The good news was that each principal brought a greater commitment to make sure that, as one principal stated frequently, "the inmates will not run the asylum". The translation was simple: teachers would be allowed to teach without interruptions and disruptions, and administrators would have the freedom to make decisions, both with complete support from campus and district administration. The school principal, with the assistance of the alternative discipline staff, began to overhaul the discipline management plan to make it more compatible with the district's agenda which was two-fold: (a) to reinforce, to the students, strict adherence to the rules and regulations of the district and alternative discipline program and (b) to provide positive assistance and interaction with each student in behavior modification and academic achievement. Central administration also provided inservice and staff development sessions for training and updating of pertinent information and programs to assist the alternative discipline personnel. These experiences, as well as current ones in Azle Independent School District, have made the author aware of several factors.

Alternative discipline programs are vital to every community that has public education. Even on the elementary level, a growing number of school districts are adding elementary alternative discipline programs. People are shocked when they hear of violent physical attacks on small children and teachers from first graders! These acts of violence from small children are not just once in a while, but happen frequently and the number of incidents is on the rise. There still are school boards that think of their alternative

program in the same way some people do, as "that place where all the bad kids go to school."

There are, however, very positive developments taking place. In the beginning, districts would place whoever they could persuade or coerce into the position of supervising an alternative school, although "supervising" was definitely a misnomer. Now, school districts are placing special emphasis on hiring only certified teachers. A well organized, alternative program can be excellent public relations for a district interested in attracting families that will become active in the schools and the community. Schools are very much like a corporation; the higher quality of employees (teachers) they can attract, the greater the opportunities of a quality product (students) in the classrooms.

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APPENDIX

THE PHOENIX DISCIPLINE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

The purpose of the Phoenix Program is to provide services which help correct problems that interfere with a student's educational process. This is done by:

* **separating a student from the home campus**
* **directly involving the parent in placement and programs**
* **providing academic emphasis and counseling**

This program is a student's last chance and offers another opportunity for students to remain enrolled in school rather than be expelled.

Responsibilities

Home Campus

* **Notify parents or placement and procedural due process**
* **Notify Phoenix and provide necessary information through a referral form**
* **Notify Special Education for an A.R.D., if applicable**
* **Secure student's assignments and forward to Phoenix as soon as possible**

Phoenix Campus

* **Conduct parent/guardian/student interview**
* **Complete parent/guardian/student AGR**
* **Secure and return student assignments in a timely manner**
* **Supervise the quality of students' work**
* **Maintain adequate records and internal control of assignments**
* **Provide information to parent/guardian and home campus relative to behavior, attendance, academics, and counseling**
* **Enforce all District and campus rules, policies, and procedures**
* **Provide special education personnel for supervision and instruction**

* **Supplement assignments with T.A.A.S. remediation**
* **Provide time for counseling**
* **Maintain an orderly environment and atmosphere conducive to learning**

Parent/Guardian

* **Attend parent/guardian/student interview**
* **Commit to the support necessary to help the student be successful**
* **Cooperate with school officials**
* **Notify Phoenix if student is taking medication and/or enrolled in the free lunch or reduced lunch program**
* **Notify Phoenix of a student's absence**

Student

* **Provide own transportation**
* **Bring all textbooks and supplies to Phoenix**
* **Complete all assignments**
* **Commit to correcting problems that interfere with success**
* **Follow all rules and regulations**

PHOENIX GUIDELINES

1. All campus and school district policies, regulations, and rules apply and will be strictly enforced. Copies of these are available at each campus.
2. Students shall attend classes from 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.. Students are responsible for their own transportation. The district will not provide any transportation except for students classified as special education. Students arriving after 8:30 a.m. are tardy, regardless of reason, and will be assigned an extra day for each tardy. When a student is absent, the parent or guardian must notify Phoenix personnel prior to 8:30 a.m.. All absences must be made up. Each unexcused absence will result in three additional days being assigned.
3. Upon arrival to the Phoenix campus, students are subject to search for contraband and checked for dress code violations. Any contraband will be confiscated and the student will be disciplined. Students with dress code violations that can not be corrected at the door will not be allowed to enter Phoenix. The student will be sent home and credit denied for the day. Food and drink items can not be brought into the building, except for lunch. Students may not bring a radio, tape player, CD's or player, video games, etc. to the school. Tobacco and related products are prohibited. Purses and bags are not to be taken to a student's desk.
4. All students, male and female, will wear blue denim or black denim jeans and plain white shirts daily. Shirts and pants are to have no emblem, slogan, or design of any kind. Clothing must not be baggy or oversized. All

outer garments must be tucked into pants or jeans with a belt. Hats and caps may not be brought to Phoenix. Flip-flops and sandals will not be permitted. Girls may wear appropriate earrings and boys may wear one stud in one ear only. Shorts and skorts are not permitted. Wallet or watch chains, heavy necklaces and bracelets are not permitted.

5. At all times students are to face forward in their seat and sit upright. Students are not to sleep or have their head down on their desk. Under no circumstances are students to leave their desk unless instructed. When permission is given to leave the desk, students are to do only what they were given permission to do. Students are to have three restroom breaks per day and are to be escorted inside the restroom under adult supervision. Emergency situations or a note from a doctor may warrant more than three restroom breaks.
6. Students are not to speak to anyone, including staff without permission. If students need assistance, they are to raise their hand without speaking or making noise until a staff member is able to acknowledge them. All verbal and nonverbal communication between students is prohibited.
7. Assignments will be distributed and collected by the staff only. Students are not allowed to sit or work together during class time. Student work areas are to be neat and orderly. All assignments turned in must be complete and show seriousness of content and quality. Students are responsible for maintaining work and assignment sheets until collected by the Phoenix staff. No work is to be taken out of Phoenix by a student. A

student will not be released to return to the home campus until all assignments have been completed. Any late work will be graded according to campus policy.

8. Students will not receive visitors or to make or receive phone calls.
9. Students are to bring a sack lunch unless enrolled in the free or reduced lunch program. Parents/guardians need to notify Phoenix staff if their child is enrolled in the free or reduced lunch program. Candy and chewing gum are strictly prohibited at Phoenix. Students may have one soft drink only at lunch. Students are not permitted to have food or drinks delivered.
10. Students are prohibited from attending or participating in any school related activity and can not be on any Azle I.S.D. campus at any time regardless if school is in session or not. Violators will be subject to criminal trespass under Section 30.05 of the Penal Code.
11. Students who take medication during their placement at Phoenix must bring a completed copy of the "Authorization to Give Medication at School" form. This also includes over the counter and non-prescription medicines. No employee of the school district may administer any medication without the completed form. All medication must be in the original container and must be properly labeled. All medication must be secured by the Phoenix staff.
12. You, the student, are responsible for bringing to school, pencils and notebook paper. Disciplinary action will be taken for those students that choose not to conform to this rule.
13. Parents will be required to pick up students who violate policies, rules, or

regulations. Bus transportation will be secured for special education students that violate policies, rules, and regulations. In each case, attendance credit for the day will be denied. Students that violate policies, rules, or regulations will have extra days added to their original placement. Persistent or serious misbehavior may result in a student being referred back to the home campus for expulsion proceedings.

14. No classes will be held on a day that regular classes are released for a holiday or for bad weather.

LONG-TERM REFERRAL FOR MAJOR OFFENSES

Major offenses are defined in the Student Code of Conduct as follows:

1. **Assaulting a teacher or other individual.**
2. **Being under the influence of selling, giving, or delivering to another person, possessing, using, or soliciting from another person:**

   Marijuana or a controlled substance, as defined by the Texas Controlled Substance Act or by 21 U.S.C. 801 at seq.

   A dangerous drug, as defined by Article 4476-15 of Vernon's or volatile chemical as defined by Article 4476-13a.

   The transmittal, sale, or attempted sale of what is represented to be any of the above-listed substances is also prohibited.
3. **Possessing a firearm, illegal knife, club, or other weapon listed as a prohibited weapon under Penal Code 46.06.**
4. **Committing arson, as defined by the Texas Penal Code 28.02.**
5. **Engaging in conduct that constitutes felony mischief, as defined by Penal Code 28.03, i.e., Vandalism, Robbery, Theft, Extortion, Coercion, or Blackmail.**
6. **Any aggressive, disruptive group demonstration that substantially disrupts or materially interferes with school activities.**
7. **Verbal abuse, i.e., name calling, racial or ethnic slurs, or derogatory statements that may disrupt the school environment or incite violence.**

THE PHOENIX DISCIPLINE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

AGREEMENT OF PARENT/GUARDIAN

I,_____, have received a description of The Phoenix Discipline Management Program which has been discussed with me and I understand the purposes and use. I give my consent to the use and implementation of these procedures and I agree to carry out those actions designated as "Parent/Guardian Expectations." I also understand that my responsibilities as a Parent/Guardian must be carried out in order for these rules and policies to be effectively implemented.

PARENT/GUARDIAN _____

STUDENT _____

PHOENIX _____

DATE _____

PHOENIX ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL
LEVEL SYSTEM

Level 1

1. Must remain in seat at all times.
   a. Must ask permission to sharpen pencil. (No ink pen)
   b. Throw away trash during bathroom break only.
2. Silent lunch in room with teacher. No soft drinks, gum, or candy.
3. Escorted to and from restroom. No talking to any students.
4. Assigned classroom seating.
5. Five (5) consecutive days with no x's and earn a minimum of 450 points to move to Level 2.
6. Three small x's equal one large X. One large X - student starts over.

Level 2

1. Must remain in seat at all times.
   a. Must ask permission to sharpen pencil. (No ink pen)
   b. Throw away trash during bathroom break only.
2. May have lunch in main room. No gum or candy.
3. Escorted to and from restroom. No talking to any students.
4. Assigned classroom seating.
5. Ten (10) consecutive days with no x's and earn a minimum of 900 points to move to Level 3.
6. Three small x's equal one large X. One large X - Level 1.

Level 3

1. Must remain in seat at all times.
   a. May ask permission to sharpen pencil. (No ink pen)
   b. May ask permission to throw away trash.
2. Student may have lunch in main room. May have soft drinks and talking during lunch is permitted. No gum or candy.
3. Unescorted restroom breaks.
4. No assigned classroom seating.
5. Fifteen (15) days or balance of placement with no large X - student returns to home campus.
6. If student receives one large X at this level, then student will drop back to Level 2.
7. At Level 3, students may wear logo shirts, tucked into jeans with a belt.
8. At this level, students may ask for 15 minute outside break.